

21 May 1947

Country: Poland

Subject: Wyzwolenie and New Wyzwolenie

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1. Wyzwolenie in Polish means release, liberation, emancipation. This word was used as the slogan and the name of a peasant movement which developed after 1905 in Central Poland (in particular in the Lublin and Kielce provinces), then under the Russians. It was a radical movement in the sense that it preached expropriation without compensation of the large estates. At the same time, it was an intensely patriotic movement. During the First World War, when the Russians withdrew from Poland, many hundreds of young members of the movement volunteered for service in the Pilsudski legions.
2. In 1918, the question arose whether the Wyzwolenie group should form a common party with the Polish Peasant Party of Galicia in the former Austrian part of Poland; this party was also known as the Piast group. The Piast were an old established political group in democratic Galicia, and its leaders, in particular, Witos, had parliamentary experience. It preached expropriation with compensation. The actual merger did not take place until after 1930. The two peasant wings had first to overcome their provincial characteristics, and Wyzwolenie much of its former radicalism. In the elections of 1919, 1922, and 1928, the Piast group dominated in the provinces of Lwow, Cracow, Poznan, Pomerania, Bialystok and Vilna; the Wyzwolenie group in the provinces of Lublin, Kielce, Lodz and Warsaw. The United Peasant Party was headed by Witos and Rataj, both members of the Piast. When Rataj was killed by the Germans during the war and Witos had grown too old to lead the party, the leadership naturally passed to Mikolajczyk, another member of the moderate wing. The most outstanding of the old Wyzwolenie members and leaders is Parginaki, one of the 16 tried at Moscow. He is again in prison, accused of 'spying'.
3. The 1947 New Wyzwolenie is a small group which seceded from the Polish Peasant Party when Mikolajczyk refused to form the Government bloc. This group has nothing in common with the traditional Wyzwolenie; it only appropriated for itself the old and honorable name of that movement. None of the New Wyzwolenie leaders was known before the war, and it is likely that at least some of them have been planted in the PSL to undermine it from within. There is no ideological difference between the Government Peasant Party (SL) and the New Wyzwolenie.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

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4. The origin and composition of the Government Peasant Party is as follows: In the election of 1919, Father Okon, an irresponsible demagogue, secured several seats in the districts between the Vistula and the San Rivers and north of that confluence for members of his party. These poor rural districts suffered great destruction in the war; they were also severely affected by the stoppage of emigration to America, and the abolition of the Russian-Austrian frontier (thousands of families had lived on the proceeds of contraband). Okon did not live long, but his followers became the easy prey of more radical Communist propaganda. In the Nowogrodek province, half Polish, half Byelorussian, the elections of 1922 gave several seats to the 'Independent Peasants' sponsored by the Communist Party. Neither of the local extremist peasants movements survived the era of prosperity between 1926 and 1929. The leader of the independents, Sylvester Wojewodzki and several of his followers, fled to Russia; some months later, they were shot as "agents of the Polish II. Bureau". The "Independent Peasants" were never heard of again. However, during the German occupation, and in particular after 1942-1943, there arose again in the Polish country-side an extremist spirit, similar to that which animated the peasant revolts in France and in Germany in the XVII and XVIII centuries.
5. Three component elements should be distinguished in the 'Government' peasant movement in Poland, whether it is called SL or Now tyswolensie:
 - a. The mass of the movement's supporters is extremely radical and partly anarchical; it is a minority phenomenon which manifests itself in Poland in times of extreme poverty and unrest.
 - b. The reins of the movement are held by disguised Communists, such as Kowalski, the speaker of the Diet.
 - c. The control is exercised partly by the professional peasant demagogues; before the war these individuals were bought by the Pilsudski camp, and are now bought by the Government bloc. They are the same individuals, serving their own materialistic interests.
6. It is extremely difficult to know what proportion of votes would be obtained by the Government Peasants of all varieties in a free election in Poland. Before the war, in the free elections of 1919, 1922, 1928, and 1930, the combined peasant parties never had more than 22% of the electoral votes (many peasants voted for the National-Democrats, the Catholics, and the Socialists, and, in the 1930 election, for Pilsudski). The Red peasant vote never exceeded 10% of the total peasant vote. All this happened before the imported agrarian revolution of 1944-1945. Admittedly, no one in Poland preaches collective agriculture. The pre-war bogey, the landowner, has disappeared. It is impossible to explain why some peasants are more Communistic than others, because there is no logical basis for their attitude — unless they are being paid by the omnipotent Government.

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